

Virginia Military Institute, Barracks
Virginia Military Institute Parade Grounds,
at end of Letcher Avenue
Lexington (independent city)
Virginia

HABS No. VA-902

HABS
VA,
82-LEX
38-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

VIRGINIA MILITARY INSTITUTE, BARRACKS

HABS No. VA-902

HABS
VA
82-LEX,
3B-

LOCATION: Virginia Military Institute Parade Grounds, at end of Letcher Avenue
Lexington, Virginia

PRESENT OWNER: VMI

PRESENT OCCUPANT: Owner

PRESENT USE: Dormitory of VMI Corps of Cadets

BRIEF STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE: Original design by A. J. Davis, 1848 and sub., burned during Civil War (1864), and rebuilt under direction of Davis (1870-73); of the subsequent additions to the original, one was (1892) by I. E. A. Rose and another (1918-19) by B. G. Goodhue, both relying heavily on earlier Davis drawings. Latest addition, referred to as "New Barracks," was built 1946-1948. The structure was named a National Historic Landmark in 1966. Since its construction the Barracks has housed sleeping quarters, classrooms, and administrative offices for VMI. In recent years classrooms and offices have been moved to nearby buildings.

PART I -- Physical History

The physical development of the VMI Barracks has been a steady process that began in November 1848 (when Davis did his first sketches), and has continued with additions, changes and modifications through many steps. Though the building was badly burned in the Civil War and has suffered many modernizations, much of the Alexander Jackson Davis design is still present, and the resultant building, as Colonel William Couper has said, "is more useful than any of the original plans, while the architectural effect of the first conception has been preserved."

Though this paper is concerned with the VMI Barracks as it now stands, it is of some importance at the outset to mention the old Lexington Arsenal which stood for about 25 years on the same site of the present Barracks. The one point that is particularly pertinent to this paper is: how the Lexington Arsenal, and subsequently the Barracks,

came to be so located.

In 1816 the Virginia legislature decided to establish three arsenals in the state, one to be in Lexington. Governor Wilson Cary Nichols wrote on April 1, 1816, to five Lexington citizens and asked them to select the site and purchase the property ("three to five acres") for the new arsenal.

They selected, as Col. Couper put it, "about five acres... on a promontory overlooking the valley of the North Branch of the James" and high above Wood's Creek. The commissioners liked this site along the crest of the hill too because it was "about eighty feet above the Great Road," later US Route 11 and Lexington's North Main Street.

In August the first tract of land was purchased from the "Exrs. of John Galbraith, deceased--4.69 acres for \$187.50." A second tract was purchased the following March from the same estate (3.02 acres for \$91.12).¹

Plans for the Arsenal building were drawn by Major John Staples, the Superintendent of the state arms factory; Lexington's Col. John Jordan "executed the brick work," according to Couper.²

Francis H. Smith, VMI's first superintendent, later described the old Arsenal as he remembered it while on a visit to Lexington May 30, 1839.

A careful inspection was made of the buildings and public grounds. The land attached to the arsenal embraced from five to ten acres, bounded on the east by the present cadets' mess hall, on the west by a line a few feet west of the cadets' barracks, extending to the main road in front, and to Wood's Creek in the rear. The arsenal was a large and substantial brick building, in the center of a small courtyard. In front of the arsenal were the soldiers' barracks, embracing a small two-story brick building in the center, with five rooms; and two wings of one story,

1. The deeds are recorded in the Rockbridge County, Va., Courthouse, #K, p.74, and #K, p. 389. Also see Couper, Vol. I, p.5 and sub., and Vol. IV, pp. 338, 339 (table of VMI land purchases).

2. Couper refers to a Jordan letter dated January, 1818; no further reference given.

each having two rooms. The sally-port was closed by a large iron-bound gate, and the court was enclosed by a brick wall fourteen feet high. The windows of the first story of the barracks were guarded by substantial iron bars; the whole establishment presenting the appearance of a prison, and such it was to the old soldiers.³

These buildings, with the "appearance of a prison," as Smith put it, comprised the physical plant of VMI when its first cadets matriculated the following November 11. Smith transformed the existing complex into suitable quarters for the new military college; additional land was purchased, and VMI prospered.

Ten years later the Institute had developed to the point that Superintendent Smith decided to ask for an appropriation from the State Legislature for \$50,000 to remove the old Arsenal building and construct a new building "upon the most approved architectural plan, so that the Institute should be presented in its buildings and grounds in such proportions and beauty as would be in harmony with its established reputation."⁴

Philip St. George Cocke, who was named to the VMI Board of Visitors in 1846, wrote in 1848: "Would it not be well to form at once, an adequate and tasteful design for the future extension of the buildings... In the end an harmonious whole shall be procured--beautiful and inspiring in style as well as commodious and well adapted to the purposes in view."⁵

General William H. Richardson, another VMI Board Member, who supported the new Barracks idea, suggested that the case might be more forcibly presented to the Legislature if plans were prepared in advance. Cocke, who in the preceeding ten years had spent about \$60,000.00 on the buildings at his plantation, "Belmead," in Powhatan County,

3. F.H.Smith, The Virginia Military Institute, (Lynchburg, Va., 1912), pp. 51, 52 and illustration op. p.50..
4. F.H.Smith, The Virginia Military Institute, p. 115, (Date of Smith's writing is not clear; presumably it came before the statements by Cocke and Richardson).
5. M. W. Paxton, Jr., "A. J. Davis, Creator of VMI Gothic." (unpublished manuscript, Rockbridge Historical Society's archives, 1965).

proposed to Smith the employment of his architect, Alexander Jackson Davis.'

When Major Gilham of the VMI faculty went to New York in the fall (1848) to purchase philosophical and chemistry apparatus, he called on Davis. Satisfactory terms were apparently agreed upon, and on November 6 Superintendent Smith wrote summarizing the barracks project as he saw it.

The letter attests to the fact that, although Mr. Davis was drawing the plans, Colonel Smith had developed the layout in great detail.

Among his instructions were:

The main front of the building to be, say 225 to 240 feet.

The depth of the square to be 150 feet. The plan will then form a rectangle...

The Barracks to be made four stories high, with the barrack rooms opening upon piazzas in the inside of the square, the rooms to accommodate three cadets and to be about 20 x 16 feet or equivalent. The object being to accommodate 200 cadets.

The barracks to be heated with hot air....it is proposed also to light with solar gas.

The estimate for completing one main front and one lateral front....not to exceed \$30,000.00.

The Barracks to be entered by one arched door in front.

The Barracks rooms for the cadets to be entirely disconnected from each other.

The main front faces south, the east front faces the river, the west front faces the town. It is proposed now to complete the southern and western fronts, but in the plan for the western front regard should be had to its prominence in facing the town of Lexington and also the parade ground. The stage road passes parallel with the southern front.

The building, as outlined by the Superintendent, was to include not only cadet living quarters, but also "a philosophical academy embracing arrangements for chemical laboratory, instruments, etc...two lecture rooms. two debating society halls...and a library room."

6. Wayne Andrews, Architecture, Ambition and Americans, (Harper & Brothers, New York, 1947 and sub.) p. 122. Andrews does not footnote this apparent conjecture, which is probably correct.

And the Superintendent duly noted, "Such a plan and estimate Maj. G. informs me you will prepare for \$50.00."⁷ Davis noted in his diary (Nov. 26, 1848) that he had "received answer dated 23d November and prepared set of drawings."⁸

By the first of December, according to Col. Couper, Davis had his sketch plans in good shape and forwarded them to Lexington with the remark: "I have now performed all that was proposed to Major Gilham and with the calculations I have made I cannot think a cheaper building could be devised for the accommodation, or that the part colored red on plans, would exceed the sum of \$30,000.00. Indeed, it may cost just what you will, by adding or cutting off 17 foot sections at pleasure... P.S. I think the building would look well in the natural brick color, without stucco, using stone for coping and foundations."

Col. Smith replied on January 13, 1849, "Absence in Richmond has delayed my attention to the claim you have against this institution for the elegant drawing you so promptly prepared for it. Above is check for \$50.00." Davis noted in his diary on January 17, 1849, that he had "received from Fran. H. Smith, check for \$50.00 on the Lexington Savings Institute, Va."

Over a year later, much to everyone's surprise (except Smith perhaps), the request to the Legislature for \$46,000.00, including \$30,000.00

7. Letter in the VMI Library. This and subsequent charges and payments do not bear out the assertion made by Wayne Andrews that for the work on VMI Davis received a "spectacular commission." Architecture, Ambition and Americans, (Harper & Bros., 1955) p. 122.

8. Though Davis' drawings of VMI were not begun until the fall of 1848, he had over ten years before completed the designs for at least two other Gothic college complexes--one for Bristol College in Pennsylvania (1835) and another for the University of Michigan (1838). The facades were not unlike his later west front of the VMI Barracks. Davis' firm called this style "English Collegiate Gothic, indicating the Oxonian and Cantabrigian sources." -- Rober H. Newton, Town and Davis, (Columbia, 1942), p. 235. Apparently neither of the earlier designs was ever constructed.

for the new barracks, won approval by large majorities in each house in an act passed March 8, 1850.

The Superintendent wasted no time communicating with Davis, sending him back the barracks plans for the completion of details. He seemed to be somewhat worried by the hot air furnaces, as, he observed, "heating by furnaces is altogether new with us."

He explained that the New Barracks would be erected ten feet in front of the then existing barracks building (i.e., old Arsenal), a hodge podge extension of the original armory building. He also gave his reasons for recommending a stucco finish for the new buildings. He suggested stucco, he said, first because of its general effect, second because of its use on existing buildings, and third because local workmen "cannot give us the finished bricks which northern art furnishes."

A lengthy correspondence was begun between the Superintendent and the New York architect involving the developing of the Institute's plans. In some of the letters the architect sketched various details that were being discussed.

In a letter on March 15, he states that he will "proceed immediately to prepare details" for the barracks. He adds that he will send in the meantime a rough sketch for the professors' houses "so as to get your views by the time the details are ready for the barracks."

The houses referred to were the two located between the present Superintendent's house and the barracks. They were built in 1853, were burned during the Civil War, and were reconstructed under Davis' supervision in 1870-73. When the parade ground was enlarged in 1914 these two were moved back a good way. In 1965 the building nearest the barracks, known as the Commandant's Quarters (originally Major Williamson's), was demolished to make way for a new Institute building.

Of the Barracks plans, Davis wrote: "Think not of any rooms in the cellar....On a slope the rooms would be damp....A great objection to having habitable rooms in the basement is the necessity of riddling the wall for light where above all it should look like solid rock.

"I will propose that whatever wood you use for doors and inside work be avowed for what it is, not to be painted at all--oiled perhaps and lac varnished. You have an abundance of black walnut, I believe--no matter if it be pine. You may turn it into ebony by means of nitric acid.

"This castle-like design would look very well without stucco or paint, leaving the walls brick color, but if desirable to refine a little, a stucco finish would doubtless give more general satisfaction, and a granite imitation would be suitable."

Davis concluded by saying that business would call him to Stanton in April, and he hoped to stop in Lexington to "visit and examine your site and get just views of the fitness of things."

Philip St. George Cocke wrote Col. Smith April 21, 1850, indicating that when Davis visited Lexington he wished to see him at "Belmead" to confer with him about the VMI plans and also about improvements at his own place. Though the letter is practically illegible, it is apparent from this letter that he is most anxious for the new VMI buildings to be finished in stone. He writes, "Stone is certainly the most appropriate material for Gothic buildings and is more durable than brick and stucco, and I suppose would be cheaper too. Houses are built of limestone everywhere in the Valley and I see it is used generally for foundations at Lexington and even at the Institute."

In his diary Davis records many details about his trip to

Lexington between May 17 and 20, 1850. He tells of taking a walk with Col. Smith and Maj. Gilham, Major J. T. L. Preston, and others "over the ground west" where they "located two professors' houses west of parade." Unfortunately there is no mention in his diary of the Barracks which was under construction during his visit. Construction had begun on March 19, eleven days after the legislation passed the appropriation. The board approved Davis' plan April 10.

Colonel John Jordan, an important local builder and a member of the VMI Board of Visitors, was contracted to do the stone work in the foundation and the carpentry; James Alexander did the brick work.⁹ The cornerstone was laid on July 4 with Lexington Judge John W. Brockenbrough making the address, taking the "occassion to refer to the portentous cloud which was gathering in the North."¹⁰ The front section of the building was occupied September, 1851.

In the 1850s the building of the Barracks was almost a continuous thing as additions were made when funds became available. Couper said "the cadets had become accustomed to seeing the place in the more or less disheveled condition which must obtain during construction." Work had begun on the east wing, that is apparently three sections of rooms and the tower in March of 1852. By finals, 1852, work was well under way "and the professors' houses were nearing completion."¹¹ But two years later the east wing was still under construction. Couper writes: "The tendency of other states to copy the military college established by Virginia was a persuasive element in securing the passage of the act of March 1, 1854, which appropriated \$20,000.00 to complete the unfinished Barracks and to apply on the erection of the Mess Hall."

9. Couper, Vol. I, p. 59.

10. Ibid, p. 228.

11. Ibid, p. 263. Couper does not footnote these points [notes 9, 10, and 11] his source is probably the superintendent's annual report.

Apparently the Mess Hall design had already been submitted by Davis. Until this time construction on the east wing had pretty well bogged down due to lack of funds. It was not until August 30, 1856, that the east wing rooms were finally occupied, but construction on the west wing was still at a standstill. At \$7,000 debt had been incurred and it seemed inadvisable to push construction here until the state's economic situation improved.

Fortunately, things did improve in the next few years and in 1859 Davis wrote Smith: "Am glad to hear of the flourishing condition and prospects of the V.M.I." The New York architect agreed to have plans for the proposed new additions (apparently he meant a further extension of the east wing) before a board meeting in October. "My copy of your barrack plan exhibits the sides in all respects like the front, 236.8^{in.} feet and what better arrangement could be made? If this does not furnish room enough, the square might be enclosed as per red color."¹²

During that year (1859) the cadets had watched the west wing along the parade ground take form. The barracks was now a U-shaped structure, and when the corps moved in on August 31, 1859, reservations had been made for 202 cadets. All rooms on the first stoop of the new addition were reserved for public purposes, and most of them were used as recitation rooms. The three tower rooms on the fourth stoop were assigned to the assistant professors, and other rooms were assigned as a prayer hall, a tailor shop, chemistry laboratory and a library. The new west wing differed from that on the east of barracks in that the tower room was much larger--in fact it was about three times as large as that on the east and the tower projection extended into the courtyard.

12. Letter of September 15, 1859. The sketch shows the fourth side of the square, which was not constructed until 1923. In the interim two other buildings were built which did not conform to the plan laid down in 1859, and it took about twenty years to get rid of each of them. Davis's letter contains an illustration of a new thing in construction--a "block of dwelling houses" on Fifth Avenue, New York City, opposite the Croton

rather than beyond the outer building line.

Couper also says, though somewhat to the contrary, that the laboratory was located on the second floor of the tower and the two top floors were devoted to the library. Of the forty-five rooms used by the cadets as quarters, more than half of them housed five cadets.

This crowded condition resulted in a new project under which the barracks was to be enlarged by extending the east wing sufficiently to accommodate fifty more cadets, and it was estimated that this could be done together with one or more professors' houses for \$30,000--a figure which would match the recent donations. At a meeting of the Board of Visitors April 26, 1860, it was decided among other things to extend the east wing seven tiers and to erect new quarters for the superintendent. Smith wrote Davis on May 21, 1860, that excavation had commenced for the foundation of the new east wing addition. He comments, "It has occurred that we might save the immense cellar the slope of the hill would give by allowing the building to follow the slope of the hill. From the corner of the (east) wing as completed I can run back some 90 feet or more.¹³ Suppose" Smith wrote, "we round that corner and then run to the northwest by the line of the hill. This would make our area an irregular polygon. Let me know what you think. It struck me we might have something of the effect at the corner like the round tower at Windsor Castle."

On this point the discussion got rather heated. Later that year in November Davis wrote the Superintendent: "I am as little wedded to symmetry as any person living (though my wife is quite symmetrical) and yet it has appeared to me from the first that your barracks ought to be 'orderly and well balanced.' Now are we to give up the hope of making our front face the Parade? and with this view to extend a wing on the right of a

13. Davis had written Smith in December, 1848, that the building he had designed could be enlarged simply by "adding...17 foot sections at pleasure."

bold center and thus dominate over the southeast (he means the south or Washington Arch facade) front?...And why should your barrack look askance at the town, and over its shoulder at the Parade?

"Is it not probable that enlarged accommodations will be required?" Davis asks. Then, in an imaginary dialogue, he replies, "Yes more accommodation is wanted now."

"Then why not extend?

"Because the ground will not admit of it.

"Ah! That should have been thought of at the outset, and a general plan secured for all time. Is there a general plan?

"Not any very definite one, as we are adding to our grounds, and cannot see exactly how our plot may lie together next year or next century.

"Very well then, plot, front and face with reference to this state of things, providing for all contingencies.

"Ah, would we could!

"Is it too late?

"No, we have only to contend with a little piece of low ground on one side of our parade and the limited contents of our purse."

Sketching out a rough plan for the quadrangle in this letter, Davis then goes on to argue for the closing of the court, even if some parts of the building would have to remain unfinished on the inside.

A letter from Davis in February of 1861 indicated that he had won his point and plans were progressing for construction of a quadrangle whose outer dimensions would be 225 feet by 326. Actually, the east wing extension plans were altered slightly to comprise only six rather than seven sections. Excavation started May 21, 1860, and contracts were let soon afterwards. But it was six years later before these six more sections of the wing were completed. The outburst of hostilities interrupted the

construction in 1862. When the east wing was finally finished, it stood substantially unchanged for the next sixty years.¹⁴

On June 12, 1864, the troops of Major General David Hunter burned the Barracks and two of the three faculty houses designed by Davis.

The rear part of the east wing was still under construction, though nearly completed in June, 1864, and escaped destruction--unlike the rest of the barracks.¹⁵

At the end of the war the following spring the VMI buildings so carefully developed by Smith and Davis stood in ruins. Undaunted, Smith began immediately to patch up the Barracks and rebuild the Institute.

In October of 1869, Davis replied to a letter from General Smith that he was "much gratified at your progress with the barrack restoration."

Asking whether all of his pre-war plans were lost in the burning of the Institute, he observed that, if they were, "it will take time to make out the whole of so great a work and I must send such items as you first need and designate by piece-meal."

The architect outlines the work he had done from 1859 to 1861, including: "General plans for barracks addition with an elevation for new front, October 15, 1859." The charge for this work was \$50. Also, among many other items, "Maj. Gilham called and we passed the day in planning, \$10." Of the total fees of \$160, \$70 had been paid on account February 14, 1861, and a balance of \$90 was still due.

"Few or none of these drawings were duplicated," he wrote, "much being in letters and others too elaborate to admit of being copied at the very small amount charged as fees, compared with ordinary demands by architects, the same being a labor of love in good part..."

14. Couper, Vol. II, p. 34.

15. Couper, Vol. III, p. 140.

Probably the pre-war plans were destroyed in the sacking of the Institute, as Davis goes on to say that he would proceed with preparing the plans he had duplicates of, and he asked the Superintendent to help him recall others. "I shall presume that we had all digested well and that we wish to adhere to what we made in 1861," he comments.

A week later he wrote to General Smith, "I send you a general plan of the entire block of barrack building by which alone the additions and mode of extending the pile can be judged as expedient and all wants be provided for at the smallest cost. And here it is that I may be able to save you two or three thousand dollars. At this you will cry, hear! hear!"

Two days later he wrote expressing his displeasure at the news that the level of the parade is eight feet above the line of the principal floor of the barrack building. "The whole mass will appear from the parade as sunken in the earth," he laments.

On November, 1869, he sent his plans for the chapel (to be located over what later became Jackson Arch). Accompanying the drawings was a plea for their acceptance in all their Gothic richness. "In the V.M.I.," he wrote, "you will agree with me that the buildings should be as correct as it is in our power to make them, with regard to the style adopted, both within and without; and that our audience hall should be shaped and seated according to the laws of phonics etc., and that cadets returning to their homes should be enabled to serve on building committees and have a competent knowledge of Castellated, Collegiate, Memorial and Domestic Gothic...that the stigma justly cast upon American architecture shall no longer apply.

"I do not ask that you should yield one iota in regard to convenience and appropriate use, for

'Can beauty deign to dwell
Where use and aptitude are strangers?' also
'Taste, never idly working, saves expense.'

"In all events, our towers and turrets will be of great use as abutments and I leave it to you if their size is not also productive of grandeur."

In February, 1870,, he encloses a large drawing for the memorial chapel.

But the elaborate chapel as Davis envisioned it was never built. In fact, there was little building at VMI during the next years as Virginia was suffering under the difficult times of Reconstruction.

In 1869 ex-Governor Letcher was elected chairman of a committee which had as its objective the establishment of a memorial to the memory of General Stonewall Jackson, but due to a number of complications, mostly financial, the project never got underway. In 1883 the Board of Visitors, in discussing the needs of the Institute, suggested that a hall for commencement exercises and a chapel, which seemed to be urgently needed, might be combined as a memorial to General Jackson.

In 1889 the project was revived by the suggestion that the plans which had been prepared more than 30 years before by Davis for "Clayton Hall of Natural History" could be modified by the inclusion of a memorial chapel at the north end of the west wing of Barracks.

In the meantime the alumni had started a fund for the purpose of erecting a monument to the VMI men who had fallen in battle, and it was suggested that the money collected be merged with the Jackson memorial fund started earlier by Letcher.

The new superintendent, Scott Shipp, in his first report in 1889 reiterated the hope that the various funds might be consolidated to make possible a Jackson Memorial Hall, with which should be combined a room for the Y. M. C. A., a gymnasium, bathing facilities for the cadets, and some

large well lighted, heated, and ventilated classrooms. The peculiar conformation of the terrain made such an assortment of things possible, and the movement gathered impetus.

In June, 1892, several plans were considered by the board and that of Isaac Eugene Alexander Rose, VMI class of '83, was adopted, although a minority report was filed which favored another plan which would have cost considerably more. The work on the foundations was done by Jno. Welsh; the Withrow Lumber Company did the remainder of the work.¹⁷ By June, 1893, the foundations were nearly completed. Construction of the new building, including the reconstruction of the library (the north walls of which had to be rebuilt as a part of the new memorial hall), was under the direction of Colonel Robert A. Marr, '77, longtime professor of engineering and drawing. Rose's plan deviated considerably from the original symmetrical drawings of the west facade by Davis.

Since 1867 the library had occupied the two lower floors of the area and the new project had simply annexed the two upper floors. At the end of the session 1895-96 the library was "dismantled and stored" so that the work of reconstruction could proceed.

An important part of the many-sided Jackson Memorial Hall project¹⁸ was a new heating plant. The heating fixtures in the barracks had been in use about thirty years and they had gone to pieces. When the barracks were built in the early fifties the power house was in a separate building and steam generated there was conducted to radiation units located in the basement, these units in turn heated air which passed over them and flowed to the rooms through ducts built in the partition walls between

17. From Superintendent's Report June 18, 1897. Architect Rose attended VMI three years and two months; he died in 1916 and is buried in Lexington.
18. Couper says the original plans (which cannot be found) show a swimming pool (which was never built) below the gymnasium floor. A drawing of the plans was reproduced in The Bomb of 1895, pp. 46-47.

the rooms. These ducts are now used for hot and cold water pipes.¹⁹

When the barracks was rebuilt in the late sixties several small heating units were placed in the cellar below the towers, and all pictures of the barracks prior to 1923 show chimneys projecting above the towers--not to mention a number of other chimneys. The new heating plant was placed in the Jackson Hall building, below the floor used as a gymnasium, during the summer of 1897. This plant with the fixtures cost about \$5,500 and was reported to be a vast improvement over the former system of heating.

The graduation exercises in 1896 were in Richmond, but the final German was held in the gymnasium of the new Jackson Hall building for the first time. The building cost \$47,000 before it was stuccoed.²⁰

A photograph in the 1896 Bomb shows the Jackson Memorial Hall under construction and how Rose's plan fit into the old "west side of barracks" which was then still much as it was when completed in August, 1859, almost 40 years before. Also it is of importance to note that the principal Gothic windows over Jackson Arch are really the work of Isaac Rose,²¹ not Davis or Goodhue, though Rose obviously relied heavily on the earlier Davis drawings he undoubtedly had at his disposal. A free hand (and apparently inaccurate) drawing of Rose's design for the west front and the floor plan for the various floors is carried in the 1895 Bomb, pp. 46, 47

In 1900 a three story building which carried many of the original barracks' architectural features, was completed and named for General Smith. This building was located in the end of the "U" made by the east and the west wings of barracks, the back of the new building being

19. Cold water was run to all rooms in 1925 and 1926; hot water, in 1936.

20. Annual report, June 18, 1897, p. 27.

21. Actually the windows were reworked slightly by Carneal and Johnson in the twenties when rooms were added in this section in place of the library, but the design is pretty much that of Rose.

in line with the end of J. M. Hall on the west, and the front of the building being in line with the end of the east wing.

There was little change in the barracks complex for the next 14 years until the Institute employed Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, to develop a plan for the Post (1914) and to design a new Jackson Memorial Hall and another series of faculty residences. At a meeting of the Board of Visitors June 20, 1916, it was "authorized to have the old Jackson Hall converted into Barracks according to the plan now being prepared by B. G. Goodhue, architect." A sum not exceeding \$30,000 was established for this purpose.

General Nichols, the VMI Superintendent, wrote to Goodhue July 19, 1916: "I have seen your plans for the conversion of the old Jackson Hall into dormitories and think it excellent. I am particularly pleased with that parade ground elevation. When completed it will be very handsome."

On August 18 Goodhue sent Colonel Thomas Jones three sets of drawings with the comment that "in an alteration job there are many small matters which need attention and cause many delays." In September he sent more plans. Earlier in the summer the old Jackson Hall had been demolished to the courtyard level.²²

Goodhue's plan for the Barracks at this point was really a return to the concept of Davis many years before, though it did not seem to change the central tower or the central Gothic windows.

In 1918 Scott Shipp Hall was begun; this would allow the classrooms to move from the old Smith Hall, which stood in the area, so that the plan could be completed to close the north side of the quadrangle. Smith Hall was demolished and in 1923 the quadrangle was completed which fulfilled Davis' plans and provided many additional rooms for cadets. An "Alumni Hall," as it was called, was provided by extending the west wing of Barracks

22. Correspondence in VMI Business Executive files. The present J. M. Hall, designed by Goodhue, had just been completed. The original blue prints for the present building are in the hands of the VMI Business Executive.

northward, preserving the same type architecture, and utilizing two of the seven tiers of the rooms erected by Goodhue in 1917. The exterior physical appearance of the Barracks did not change appreciably until the "New Barracks" addition in 1946-48. It is of interest though that in the summer of 1941 considerable repairs were made to the Barracks, particularly the east side because of "rotting bricks." Colonel Couper recorded the construction in a series of photographs in the VMI Business Executive's files. According to a letter from General C. E. Kilbourne to Governor Price (May 26, 1941) this "rotting" was confined to "that part of the Barracks which was destroyed by the Federal Forces in 1864" and rebuilt after the war.²³ The letters in the Business Executive's files indicate that this rebuilding was done under the critical eyes of Colonel Couper.

Following World War II the Board of Visitors decided to enlarge the Corps; more barracks area was needed. Many plans had been submitted in previous years for enlarging the building; one in 1920 recommended a new quadrangle attached to the east side down the hill.

But it was finally decided to build an addition attached to the north end along the edge of the parade ground. To do this the old library building was taken down. Carneal and Johnson, the principal VMI architect in the 20th century, was engaged to design the new wing. The firm followed much of the same design Davis had prepared for the South (original) facade.

Lexington contractor, Charles Barger, built the structure, completing it in 1948. It was first occupied in the fall of that year. Three years later the new archway was dedicated and named for VMI Graduate George C. Marshall; the other two entrances are named for Generals Washington and Jackson.

²³. Letter in VMI Business Executive's files.

There has been little change in the Barracks facade since the addition of the "New Barracks" except for one obvious (and architecturally unfortunate) one in the 1960s. Metal screens have been added to every window, obscuring the diamond-shaped panes which gave the Barracks for over 100 years its distinctive Gothic appearance. Perhaps if cadet

prevails, the screens will be removed in the future and the Barracks will have again (as Colonel Couper wrote before the screens were up) "the architectural effect of the first conception...."²⁴

24. Cadet lore has it that the screens were put in to keep first classmen (who live on the ground floor) from "running the block," i.e. going and coming after taps. Cadet ingenuity has of course long overcome this minor obstacle. Cadets interviewed look upon the screens as a general nuisance.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Fortunately considerable records are available about the original construction and later additions and changes to the VMI Barracks. Colonel William Couper deals at length with almost every step of the structure's history in his One Hundred Years at VMI published in 1939. Further, M. W. Paxton, Jr., publisher of Lexington's NEWS-GAZETTE, has done extensive research on A. J. Davis's part in designing the Barracks and other Institute buildings. In November, 1965, Paxton read a paper entitled "A. J. Davis, Creator of VMI Gothic" to The Fortnightly Club in Lexington. These two sources have been heavily drawn upon in this paper. In this paper large portions of Paxton's paper and footnotes were copied verbatim. A copy of his work can be found in the Rockbridge Historical Society's archives.

Of particular importance are the drawings of the Barracks in the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art. All of these drawings have been copied and are in the hands of the Rockbridge Historical Society. Other sources pertinent to this paper are described in the footnotes.

Royster Lyle, Jr.

See also: Lyle, Royster, Jr. and Simpson, Pamela. The Architecture of Historic Lexington. Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1977.

Druscilla Null, HABS 1983

II -- Architectural Information

A. General Statement. - - The building, an imposing Gothic al structure, is well maintained by the VMI staff.

B. Exterior -- Front of Barracks or South

1. foundation -- dressed limestone.
2. texture -- finished stucco, scored to resemble stone.
3. entrance has two-centered Gothic arch with label over it.
4. window above arch has a Tudor label over it.
5. octagonal towers, crenelated parapet with stone corbels below, interspersed with Gothic arches.

The top of the front facade are other small corbels.

6. window casements are arranged in two windows, first and second floor grouped with panel between. Same is true of the third and fourth floor.
7. roof, flat.
8. chimney, not visible.
9. NOTE: Evidence of plaster patching indicating removal of original balcony over arched opening.

C. Exterior -- Parade facade or west

1. stone, segmental arch; jams are alternately dressed and rustic stones; voussoirs, same with variation in center. Date above arch, "1896." Name of "Stonewall Jackson" in stone with raised Gothic lettering.
2. center window: pointed Gothic window with wood tracery, diamond panes. This is true of two smaller side windows.
3. lower windows (2), segmented arch head, wooden tracing.
4. On either side of the windows in the small towers are vertical "slots", two in the small (outside) towers and three in the taller (inside) towers.
5. molding -- Cavetto and Astragal in stone run from the ends to the center of the octagonal members.
6. windows on left of frontispiece do not follow same pattern.
7. tie rods to left of frontispiece -- five pointed star bolts.

D. Interior of Quadrangle

1. foundation -- limestone.
2. wall construction -- brick faced inside quadrangle, whereas stucco is used everywhere on the outside.
3. porches -- reinforced concrete, around the entire interior of the building; porches have pipe railings; reinforced concrete stairs rise at each corner.

E. Typical Room Appearance

1. wood door, nine glazed above; three flat panels below lock rail; three lights over transom.
2. Every room was not examined, but in the original portion of the building most woodwork seemed to be uniform and about the same age.

F. Sentinel Box

1. In the center of the "old Barracks" is a sentinel box, octagonal, stucco faced with crenelated parapet.

Edited for HABS by Druscilla J. Null

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